

Message Text

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ACTION SY-02

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9775

S E C R E T NOFORN CARACAS 4016

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EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC (SECSTATE)

SUBJECT: SECVISIT LA- SECURITY

REF: STATE 85780, CARACAS 3868, 3897 AND 3964

GENERAL SECURITY ASSESSMENT REMAINS BASICALLY THE SAME AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. THE FOLLOWING IS PROVIDED, HOWEVER, TO DEPICT AREAS OF TENSION WITHIN VENEZUELA AND TO COMMENT FURTHER ON LOCAL SECURITY SERVICES:

1. THE VISIT TO VENEZUELA OF SECRETARY OF STATE ROGERS WILL OCCUR SEVEN MONTHS BEFORE THE DECEMBER PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WHEN THE POLITICAL PARTIES ARE HEATEDLY INVOLVED IN ELECTIONEERING ACTIVITIES WHICH HAVE RESULTED IN SEVERAL INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE TO DATE. THE MOST RECENT OCCURRED ON 8 MAY WHEN A STUDENT, REPORTEDLY A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNING SOCIAL CHRISTIAN (COPEI) PARTY, WAS SHOT AND KILLED BY AN UNIDENTIFIED SHARPSHOOTER WHO FIRED ON A GROUP OF DEMONSTRATORS PROTESTING THE ARRIVAL IN VALERA, TRUJILLO STATE, OF CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ, CANDIDATE OF THE MAJOR OPPOSITION DEMOCRATIC ACTION (AD) PARTY. ON 9 MAY VIOLENT STUDENT RIOTS OCCURRED IN MARACAY, ARAGUA STATE, PROTESTING THE KILLING.

2. ON THE EVENING OF 9 MAY THE VENEZUELAN CONGRESS PASSED THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BARRING THE CANDIDACY OF FORMER DICTATOR MARCOS PEREZ JIMENEZ. PEREZ JIMENEZ SUPPORTERS HELD A PROTEST

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DEMONSTRATION OUTSIDE CONGRESS AND SOME ARRESTS WERE MADE.

3. UNSUBSTANTIATED MILITARY COUP RUMORS HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING, A CAUSE OF CONCERN TO POLITICAL LEADERS AND TO PRESIDENT RAFAEL CALDERA WHO IS CONDUCTING INVESTIGATIONS OF MILITARY OFFICERS.

4. THE GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY ARE ALSO CLOSELY WATCHING COLOMBIAN TROOP ACTIVITY IN THE DISPUTED VENEZUELAN/ COLOMBIAN BORDER AREA WHERE COLOMBIAN TROOPS LAST WEEK WERE REDEPLOYED CLOSER TO THE BORDER. THE VENEZUELAN BELIEVE THESE TROOP MOVEMENTS ARE CONNECTED WITH THE RECENT BREAKOFF IN BORDER NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, AND VENEZUELA HAS REINFORCED ITS TROOPS IN THE AREA.

5. FAIRLY SERIOUS CIVILIAN VIOLENT STREET DISTURBANCES OCCURRED IN THE 23 DE ENERO LOW- INCOME AREA OF CARACAS ON 3 AND 4 MAY RESULTING IN THE ARREST OF 100 PERSONS. ON 4 MAY SHARPSHOOTERS IN THE AREA FIRED UPON A METROPOLITAN POLICE HELICOPTER, AND UN-IDENTIFIED ASSAILANTS AMBUSHED AND WOUNDED A METROPOLITAN POLICEMAN AND HIS DRIVER. THE DISTURBANCES STEMMED FROM A DEMONSTRATION DURING THE 1 MAY LABOR DAY ACT WHICH DEVELOPED INTO RIOTING IN THE AREA DURING WHICH A YOUTH WAS SHOT AND KILLED BY POLICE. BUT THE PRESS SPECULATES THAT THE BANDERA ROJA GUERRILLA ORGANIZATION MAY BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SHOOTINGS. THERE HAS BEEN RECURRENT RIOTING IN THIS AREA, AND THE NATIONAL GUARD HAS BEEN DEPLOYED THERE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS TO MAINTAIN ORDER. MORE POLICE HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO THE AREA.

6. TO DATE THERE ARE NO KNOWN TERRORIST OR LEFTIST ACTIVITIES PLANNED IN CONNECTION WITH THE SECRETARY' S VISIT. THE ARMED FORCES OF NATIONAL LIBERATION (FALN) HAS CANCELLED ALL PLANNED TERRORIST ACTIVITIES UNTIL JUNE OR JULY AND, ACCORDING TO A FALN SOURCE, HAS NO PLANS CONNECTED WITH THE VISIT.

7. THE PERPETUAL SECONDARY SCHOOL DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE LESSENERD IN RECENT WEEKS BUT CONTINUE TO CROP UP. NONE ARE KNOWN TO BE PLANNED IN CONNECTION WITH THE VISIT, BUT THE OCCURRENCE OF SCATTERED

DISTURBANCES IN THIS CONNECTION CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED. CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF VENEZUELA (UCV), LONG A CENTER OF STUDENT RIOTING, HAS BEEN CALM FOR THE MOST PART IN RECENT MONTHS BUT SECURITY SERVICE REPORTS INDICATE THAT DISTURBANCES AGAIN MAY BE IN THE SECRET

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MAKING ON THE UCV CAMPUS. ACCORDING TO A SECURITY SERVICE SOURCE THE MOVEMENT TO SOCIALISM (MAS) HAS BEEN PROTESTING THE ARREST OF

UCV STUDENTS DURING ACTIVITIES ON 1 MAY AND HAS BEEN TRYING TO ORGANIZE AN ANTI- GOVERNMENT MARCH DURING THE WEEK OF 7 MAY.

8. THE LOCAL SECURITY SERVICES WILL COORDINATE PLANS WITH US OFFICIALS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE SECRETARY DURING HIS VISIT. THEY ARE FULLY PREPARED AND WILL PROVIDE ALL REQUIRED ASSISTANCE. THEY DO NOT EXPECT ANY PROBLEMS BUT HAVE CONTINGENCY PLANS TO CHANGE
THE ROUTING OF HIS TRAVEL IN CARACAS IN THE EVENT ANYTHING SHOULD DEVELOP. THEY ARE WELL PREPARED AND EXPERIENCED IN COPING WITH STUDENT DISTURBANCES.
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